



SESSION 7: IRENAEUS TO TERTULLIAN – READINGS

De Oratione (Concerning Prayer), Tertullian:

“So, therefore, prayer as established by Christ consisted of three elements: the word, by which it is uttered; the spirit, in which alone lies its power; and the ‘reason’, by which it is taught... Let us consider therefore, blessed ones, His heavenly wisdom, particularly the precept to pray in secret, in which he both exacted man’s faith, his trust that both the sight and the hearing of the all-powerful God are present within the house and even in a secret place, and also longed for the obedience of faith, so that man should offer his worship to Him alone, who he was confident sees and hears everywhere.”

“It begins with witness to God and the reward of faith, when we say: **Father, Who art in heaven**. For we are both praying to God and setting forth our faith, the reward of which is the right to call Him by this name... And in calling Him Father, we name Him God also. This name indicates at once His regard for us and His power. Also, in calling on the Father, we are calling upon the Son, for He says: ‘I and the Father are one’. Nor is the Mother, the Church, overlooked either, since in ‘son’ and ‘father’ ‘mother’ is implied, from whom the names both of father and son derive their meaning.”

“**Hallowed be Thy Name**, we ask that it should be made holy in us, who are in Him, and at the same time, in all others, on whom the grace of God is still waiting, that we may obey this precept also, by praying for all, even for our enemies.”

“In accordance with this form we add: **Thy will be done in heaven and in earth**, not because any one is opposing the doing of God’s will, and we are praying that He may see His will triumph, but we ask that His will may be done in all... What else does God will but that we should walk according to His training? We ask, therefore, that He supply us with the nature and power of His will, that we may be safe both in heaven and on earth, because the chief purpose of His will is the salvation of those whom He has adopted.”

“Likewise when we say, **Thy will be done**, even in that petition we are praying for our own benefit, because there is no evil in God’s will, in spite of the fact that each man is rewarded according to his merits. By the use of this phrase we give ourselves a timely warning that may help us to endure.”

“**Thy kingdom come** is also closely bound up with the petition: ‘Thy will be done’. It means *in us*, of course. For when does God not reign, ‘in whose hand is the heart of all kings’? But whatever we pray for for ourselves, we assign to Him, and we attribute to Him what we expect from Him... We are eager to enter our Kingdom; we do not want to serve too long... The souls of the martyrs under the altar call aloud to the Lord in their displeasure: ‘How long wilt Thou not avenge our blood, O Lord, on the inhabitants of the earth?’”

“And yet we ought rather to understand **Give us our daily bread this day** in a spiritual sense. For ‘our bread’ is Christ, because Christ is life and the bread of life: ‘I am’, He says, ‘the bread of life’ and a little earlier: ‘bread is the word of the living God, that descendeth from heaven’ and further because His body is also deemed to be in the bread: ‘This is my body’. Therefore in asking daily bread we ask to live perpetually in Christ and undivided from His body. But because this phrase is admitted in a carnal sense, it cannot be realised without the piety that belongs to spiritual instruction as well. For He commands that bread be sought, which is all the faithful need.”

“It followed that, having noted the generosity of God, we should beg for His mercy also. For what good will nourishment do, if we allotted to Him exactly as a bull is to sacrifice? The Lord knew that He alone was without sin. He teaches us, therefore, to ask that ‘**our debts be forgiven us**’. ‘Debt’, moreover, is in the Scriptures a figure for sin, because, like debt, sin is due to be judged...”

“To the fullness of so comprehensive a prayer He made the addition, that we might make entreaty not only for the forgiveness of sins, but also for their entire removal: **Lead us not into temptation**; in other words, ‘Do not allow us to be deceived, of course, by ‘him who tempts’. But away with the idea that the Lord should be thought to tempt, as if He either did not know each man’s faith or was eager to dethrone it.”

“Therefore the clause brings the answer, explaining what is meant by: ‘Lead us not into temptation’. For this is what it means: **But draw us away from the evil one.**”

“How many commands of the prophets, gospels, apostles, how many words of the Lord, parables, illustrations, precepts are alluded to in an abbreviated form in very few words! How many duties are fully set forth at once! Respect to God in the Father, witness to faith in His name, offering of obedience in the will, mention of hope in the kingdom, desire for life in bread, confession of debts in prayer for forgiveness, anxiety about temptations in the request for protection! What wonder? God alone could teach how He wished prayer to be addressed to Him... But what sense is there in engaging in prayer, with hands washed, it is true, but with spirit befouled, since even for the hands themselves spiritual cleanliness is necessary, that they may be raised in a state of purity from forgery, from murder, from cruelty, from poisonings, from idolatry and all other stains, which are devised by the spirit, though they are carried out by the work of the hands.”

Concerning Baptism, Tertullian

“In my opinion the authority belonging to the liquid element requires examination. As a matter of fact it is amply attested, and indeed from the beginning. For it is one of those elements which, before the world was created at all, rested with God in a form as yet rude. ‘In the beginning’, Scripture says “God made heaven and earth. But the earth was invisible and in disorder, and there was darkness over the deep, and the spirit of the Lord moved over the waters’. It is your duty, oh man, to hold in reverence, in the first place, the age of the waters, because their substance is ancient, in the second place their worth, as the home of the divine spirit, more pleasing assuredly than the other elements of that time... Its first aspect is that by which even in those days the very attitude gave an early indication of the manner of Baptism, namely that ‘the spirit of God’, which from the beginning, ‘moved upon the’ primal ‘waters’ would rest over the waters of Baptism. Moreover, it was certainly a holy thing that moved over what was holy, and the supporting waters borrowed their holiness from that which moved over them. So the nature of the waters, having been made holy by that which is holy, has itself also conceived the power to sanctify. Let no one say: ‘Are we really dipped in the very waters which existed then in the beginning?’ Not, of course, the very waters except to the extent to which, while there is one class, there is a number of subdivisions. What belongs to the class also extends also to the subdivision. Therefore there is no difference whether one is washed in the sea or in a pool, in a river or in a spring, in a lake or in a river bed, and there is no difference between those whom John ‘dipped in the Jordan’ and Peter in the Tiber... I do not mean to say that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the water, but having been cleansed in the water, we are being prepared under the angel for the Holy Spirit.”

“Then, leaving the bath we are anointed all over with blessed unction according to the primitive practice by which priests were wont to be anointed with olive oil from the horn. This custom obtained ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses, whence he is called ‘anointed’ from the chrism, which is anointing. This adapted the name to the Lord, when it became spiritual. For He was anointed with the spirit by God the Father... Thereafter, a hand is laid on us by way of blessing, summoning and inviting the Holy Spirit.”

“How many protections, therefore, in nature, how many privileges in grace, how many rites in outward religion, patterns, preparations, supplications, have regulated the worship connected with water! At first, for example, when the people, freed from the shackles of Egyptian bondage, escaped the violence

of the king of Egypt by crossing the water, the water put an end to the king himself with all his forces. What pattern could be clearer in the mystery of Baptism!...Christ is never apart from water: for even He Himself is baptized with water; when invited to a wedding He inaugurates with water the earliest trials of His power; when He speaks he invites them 'that thirst' to His 'everlasting water'; when He teaches about love, He commends the offering of 'a cup of water' to a destitute person among the works of love; at a well He recovers His strength, 'on water He walks', He crosses the water with delight, with water He serves his disciples. The evidence of Baptism continues right to the time of His passion; when He is given over to the cross, water interposes; Pilate's hands know this; when He is wounded, water breaks forth from His side; the soldier's spear knows it."

"'Ask and we shall receive', He says. Ye have indeed asked and found; ye have knocked and the door has been opened unto you. I only pray that, when ye ask, ye may also remember Tertullian, a sinner."